Numb. 11.

The EXAMINER.

From **Thursday** *October* 5. to **Thursday** *October* 12, 1710.

Est Genus Hominum qui esse se primos omnium rerum volunt,
Nec sunt: Hos consector. Ter.

AMONG all the ill Qualities in Mankind, I know none that makes a worse Figure, than *Excess of Vanity*. 'Tis disagreeable wherever we meet with it; but no where so much as in a Writer. A little *extempore* Conceitedness may be endur'd; but a meditating lucubrating Fop is intolerable. A *vain* Coxcomb in Company may, under good Management, be made diverting for a quarter of an Hour; and a *vain* Officer in an Army, may have the luck to succeed in some rash Enterprize: In such Cases as these it often falls out, that *Something is produc'd out of Nothing*. Nay, I have known one of these *Thraso*'s, celebrated by a judicious Author for a Hero, and propos'd as a Pattern of Military Virtue to the Men of Arms: But the same Spirit of *Vanity*, that made this Gentleman pass with *some* for a *Hero*, cou'd never make him pass with *any* for a *Poet*. An Author cannot take a surer way of lessening the Reputation of his Performances, than by over-valuing them. But little Writers are betray'd into this Folly, by an indiscreet Imitation of Great Ones. They that are acquainted with my Lord *Bacon*'s Essays will easily pardon him for saying, *He conceives they will last as long as Books last*. They that read the Episode of *Nisus* and *Euryalus*, would give *Virgil* leave to boast,

Nulla dies unquam memori vos eximet ævo;
Dum Domus Æneæ Capitoli immobile saxum
Accolet, imperiumq; Pater Romanus habebit.

And yet he modestly introduces it with

——*Si quid mea carmina possunt.*

Writers of the first Rank, in Works design'd for Eternity, may be allow'd to have a due Sense of their own Excellencies: But for a weekly Retailer of loose Papers, one of which is still dying before the next is born, to assume the same Privilege, is perfectly ridiculous. I must observe farther, That the *Ancients* (I wish I cou'd say a *Modern* too, whom I am by and by to Examine) where they are guilty of this Ostentation, seem sensible of the risque they run, and take pains in those very places to excel, and to out-write themselves. That *Vain* Epistle of *Tully* to *Lucceius*, is one of the best in the whole Collection. And the two last *Odes* of the 2d and 3d Books of *Horace*, where he promises himself Fame and Immortality, are wrought up with exquisite Skill and Care: And yet when he comes to

——*Sume Superbiam*
Quæsitam meritis;

he dares not venture to speak it in his own Person, but with a fine turn of Thought applies it to his *Muse*. 'Tis plain that *Horace* saw 'twas too much to take to himself: They must have great Modesty and Judgment; who, after this, can chuse it for their *Motto*. I never heard of any but one *Scholar* and the *Tatler*, that cou'd think it became 'em. Men that have this Satisfaction in their own *Merit*, wou'd enjoy it with more quiet, if they did not provoke People to disturb them; but the Itch of being very Abusive is almost inseparable from *Vain-Glory*. *Tully* has these two Faults in so high a degree, that nothing but his being the best Writer in the World, can make amends for them: And yet the *Tatler* in his Paper of *September* 26. has out-done him in Both; he speaks of himself with more Arrogance, and with more Insolence of others.

First, he sets himself out as a *Noble Creature that is*, as it were, *the Basis and Support of Multitudes*: Meaning, I suppose, *John Nutt*, *John Morphew*, *Charles Lilly*, *&c.* This indeed is very great; but it often happens, that Supporters, which have such a Weight upon them, are scarce able to support themselves. I am in no Critical Humour at present; or else I should ask him, what sort of *Basis* it is that *supports* something *below* it, as I take an *Inferior* to be? I know he will have recourse again to his *saving* Expression, that did him some Service once before, and tell me, that he does not call it a *Basis*, but a *Basis* **as it were**: And this will, *as it were*, be as good as writing correctly: Tho' in this Paper he does not seem so much to aim at being correct, as copious. He is so intent upon being something Extraordinary, that he scarce knows what he would be; and is as fruitful in his Similes, as a Brother of his whom I lately took notice of. In the compass of a few Lines he compares himself to a *Fox*, to *Daniel Burgess*, to the *Knight of the Red Cross*, to an *Oak with Ivy about it*, and to a *Great Man with an Equipage*: But at last he rises in his Images, and nothing will satisfie him but the *Sun*. He has taken, it seems, the Device of the King of *France*, and, I suppose, 'twill not be long before he has his Motto too,

Nec pluribus impar.

And truly 'twill suit well enough, if those he has to deal with, are what he in his great Civility and good Breeding, represents them, *Owls*, *Bats*, *Fleas*, *Lice*, *Vermin*, *small Wits*, *Scriblers*, *Niblers*, *&c.* After this List of Names, I was surpriz'd to hear him say, That *he has hitherto kept his Temper pretty well*. I wonder how he will write, when he has lost his Temper.

Temper. I ſuppoſe, as he now is very angry and unmannerly, he will then be exceeding courteous and good-humour'd.

I had a Curioſity to know where his *Apartment* was on the 25th of *September*, when he talk'd ſo much of *Fleas*, and *Lice*, and *Vermin*; or what place cou'd fill his Head with ſuch Ideas. I have heard ſome Criticks ſay that *Lee* cou'd have writ his *Conſtantine* no where but in *Bedlam*; and that 'twas eaſy to diſcover a Scene in *Otway*, that ſmelt of the *Spunging-Houſe*. But I forbore this Inquiry, and went on to the next Simile which he honours himſelf with: *His Antagoniſts*, he ſays, *are like a great Man's Equipage, who do Honour to the Perſon on whom they Feed.* This is ſomething more gentile: I am glad he has an Equipage that gratifies his *Vanity*: But there is an *Equipage* that does no great *Honour to the Perſon on whom they Feed.* I have heard of a certain Illuſtrious Perſon, who having a *Guard du Corps*, that forc'd their Attendance upon him, put them into a Livery, and maintain'd them as his Servants: Thus anſwering that famous Queſtion,

Quis Cuſtodiet ipſos Cuſtodes?

For he, I think, might properly be ſaid to keep his Keepers, in *Engliſh* at leaſt, if not in *Latin*. If you intend, Mr. *Tatler*, to keep your Attendants, you muſt be a little more punctual in your Payments: They complain that they have nothing to feed upon, and are in great danger of Starving.

You gave them your Word long ſince, that you wou'd begin to be *Witty* in *October*; and in this modeſt Eſſay upon your ſelf, that lies before me, you promiſe to *Shine*. I have heard ſome that have waited upon you this Fortnight, ſay, they no more can perceive any Sparks of Wit or Light to break from you, than they did when you was *Dull by Deſign*.

I ſeldom read ſuch idle Papers: The flaming one with *Quæſitam meritis*, &c. in the Front, fell into my Hands by chance; but ſeeing there that you were ſo bent upon *excelling* and *ſhining*, I was tempted to look into what you have writ ſince, and that has quite cur'd my Curioſity for the future.

When I read your Account of the *Pillion*, drawn out into two Pages, how tedious, thought I, are old Men in telling old Stories; and how much better was this told by Mrs. *Andrea Polhill* at her Maid's Wedding?

I hop'd, as you did, that your Friend the *Upholſterer* had been Dead: He was of a very low Character at firſt; but after we had had his Company ſo often, a long Letter from him was extremely inſipid.

I perus'd your Hiſtory of *Joſeph*. Do you intend to go through the *Old Teſtament*? If you do, let me recommend a Book that may be of uſe to you: I found *Blome*'s Hiſtory of the Bible in my Maid's Hand, and turn'd to the Story of *Joſeph*: He tells it more pathetically than you do, and gives us a pretty Picture of it beſides.

If you *ſhine on* at this rate, your Antagoniſts, as you call 'em, are ſafe; you'l *ſcorch* nothing but Turkies and Capons.

You produc'd a Stanza or two out of the *Red-Croſs* Knight, that did not ſuit your Performances ſo well, as another Paſſage of *Spencer*'s that I refer you to.

The Gentle Uſher VANITY *by Name,*

whom you have choſen for your Guide, will ſhow you the way to a Houſe thus deſcrib'd:

A ſtately Palace built of ſquared Brick,
Which cunningly was without Mortar laid;
Whoſe Walls were high, but nothing ſtrong nor thick,
And golden foil all over them diſplay'd.
It was a goodly Heap for to be behold,
But full great pity that ſo fair a Mold,
Did on ſo weak Foundation ever ſit:
For on a ſandy Hill that ſtill did flit
And fall away, it mounted was full high,
That ev'ry breath of Heaven ſhaked it.
Great Troops of People travell'd thither-ward,
Both day and night, of each degree and place;
But few returned, having ſcaped hard,
With baleful Beggary, or foul Diſgrace.

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